

App-Happy Kids Head Outside for a Rewarding Experience

More than 3 miles of trails in County Parks are part of the TRACK Trails program, a nationwide network of outdoor adventures for kids, coordinated by an organization called [Kids in Parks](#).



The program rewards kids for spending time outdoors – both with new experiences and with nature-related gifts.

Kids can earn “Trail TRACKer Gear” for registering their adventures in an online nature journal, and for reaching certain milestones. There are six prizes in all including items like magnifying lenses and backpacks, designed to enhance their outdoor experiences.

There are three TRACK Trails in County Parks: [San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Preserve](#), [Lindo Lake County Park](#) and [Louis Stelzer County Park](#). Along each path are informational kiosks, with brochures highlighting specific activities that kids can participate in to earn credit online.

Research tells us that kids spend an average of 7.65 hours per day “plugged in” – and only 7 minutes per day in unstructured outdoor play. This limited time outdoors can pose negative complications; according to Kids in Parks organizers, increased physical activity has the potential to decrease issues like obesity, diabetes, ADHD and other physical and mental complications.

The Kids in Parks vision and ultimately, the TRACK Trails program, grew out of a desire to turn this trend on its head; using on-screen technology to get kids to head outside. Today the program spans more than 130 locations, with activities in 7 states, Washington DC and the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation.

“Kids are connected today more than ever,” said Brian Albright, Director of the County of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). “We see this is an opportunity to speak with them in a new and exciting way, and to let them see for themselves everything County Parks has to offer.”

Cailín Hunsaker, District Manager for DPR, manages the County’s TRACK Trails program.



“There are so many benefits to having educational programs in parks,” said Cailín. “With TRACK Trails we are fostering stronger relationships between kids and their local environment, and we’re taking steps to cultivate the next generation of parks ambassadors.”

“It would be great to see these kids grow up protecting San Diego’s land and natural resources, and to seek their own outdoor adventures,” she added.

Launching TRACK trails at two County Parks was made possible by a \$15,644.23 donation from grocery store chain [JIMBO’s... Naturally](#), after being selected as a recipient of one biannual Customer Appreciation Day. The TRACK Trail at Lindo Lake Park was made possible by a grant from the National Recreation and Park Association.

For more information, visit [Kids in Parks online](#) or [read the article](#) from the grand opening just two years ago, at San Elijo Lagoon.



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